

FCC Comments on 02-277 April 27, 2003

The proposal to further deregulate ownership of the broadcasting industry (vertically and horizontally) is threatening the very foundation of our democracy. Radio is already a wasteland, thanks to deregulation of that industry. No channel that I can find except NPR carries any news in the Albuquerque market, much less public service announcements. Just the same old boring playlists that I rarely bother listening to and a few extremely partisan radio talk show hosts. I've been polled five times in the past year about what radio stations I listen to, and I tell them the same thing: almost exclusively public radio because the rest of the channels are all the same. Luckily our local public radio station has NPR news, a jazz show, a classical music show, world music, etc., so there is some recourse to the pop sop we are fed generally.

Now you are proposing similar deregulation for television broadcasting. In so doing, you ignoring your duties to the American public—who owns the airwaves—to insure that a diversity of opinion and creativity is available. You are instead only furthering the economic interests of a few elite in our society who want even more money and power than they already have rather than safeguarding the interests of democracy, which is your job. How ironic that we allegedly have invaded Iraq to bring democracy to their country at the same time when it is being stifled in our own country. Witness the banning of the Dixie Chicks from radio stations nationwide for expressing their dissent with the Bush Administration.

Even Barry Diller, of the broadcasting industry, opposes these new rules, pointing out that only 5 companies now control 90 percent of what I see on TV (when I bother to watch). To get any diversity of opinion on the Iraq war, for example, I had to go to NPR, Democracy Now, and the Internet. I used to think that only totalitarian governments such as the former Soviet Union suppressed dissent and put out propaganda to control their citizens. But America is heading in the same direction.

I implore you to rise above short-term economic interests and parochial politics to defend access to the forum of ideas on which this country was founded. The FCC is one of the last defenses we have. If anything, it should be requiring more diversity of opinion and public service access from corporate media, such as free time for presidential candidates, not more consolidation which will offer us even less diversity than we have now. Please think long and hard about your responsibility to the American public and our democracy and vote against any further deregulation.

Sincerely,
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